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Recent Factors Affecting SWP Supplies

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RECENT FACTORS AFFECTING SWP SUPPLIES

Since the last round of Urban Water Management Plans (UWMPs) were prepared in 2005, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has twice updated its State Water Project (SWP) Delivery Reliability Report. In each of its updates, DWR has projected further reductions in average SWP water deliveries than were projected in 2005. The 2009 Report is the most recent update, and identifies several emerging factors that have the potential to affect the availability and reliability of SWP supplies. Although the 2009 Report presents an extremely conservative projection of SWP delivery reliability, particularly in light of events occurring since its release, it remains the best available information concerning the SWP. Following is information and a brief summary of several factors identified in the 2009 Report having the potential to affect the availability and reliability of SWP supplies.

New U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Opinion for Delta Smelt and Related Litigation Matters

SWP operations have been challenged in connection with potential impacts to the Delta smelt, a small fish that resides only in the Delta and is protected under CESA and the ESA. In February 2005, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) issued a “no jeopardy” determination and biological opinion (B.O.) analyzing potential impacts to the Delta smelt in connection with the long-term coordinated operations of the California State Water Project (SWP) and the federal Central Valley Project (CVP) through the year 2030. The project/action evaluated in the B.O., formally known as the “Operations Criteria and Plan” (or OCAP), includes existing pumping operations, proposals to increase SWP pumping over the next 30-year period, and other proposed long-term operational changes. In February 2005, several environmental groups filed suit in federal court against FWS and the Secretary of the Interior challenging the validity of the B.O. (*Natural Resources Defense Council v. Kempthorne*, USDC Case No. 05-CV-1207-OWW.)

In May 2007, the Federal District Court for the Eastern District of California determined that the B.O. violated the requirements of the ESA. In order that the SWP and CVP could continue to operate, the court established interim operating requirements for the Projects that would remain in place until a new B.O. was completed (the Interim Remedies) (December 14, 2007). The Interim Remedies were based on various factors occurring in the Delta, such as prevailing hydrologic and flow conditions, and the distribution and spawning status of Delta smelt. For the 2007-2008 water year, the Interim Remedies were reported to have reduced SWP supplies by approximately 500,000 acre-feet.

On December 15, 2008, FWS issued its new B.O. The B.O. concludes that the proposed long-term coordinated CVP and SWP operations will “jeopardize” the Delta smelt and “adversely modify” its critical habitat according to ESA standards. Pursuant to the ESA, because the B.O. is a “jeopardy” opinion, FWS was required to formulate and adopt as part of the B.O. a “Reasonable and Prudent Alternative” (RPA) to the proposed action that FWS believes will not cause jeopardy to the Delta smelt or adversely modify or destroy its critical habitat, and which can be implemented by Reclamation and DWR. (16 U.S.C. § 1536(b)(3)(A).) The RPA adopted as part of the B.O. imposed various new operating restrictions upon the CVP and SWP and has the potential to result in substantial water supply reductions from the Projects.

Soon after the B.O. was issued, DWR published information estimating that in comparison to the level of SWP exports from the Delta previously authorized under State Water

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Resources Control Board (State Board) Decision 1641 (D-1641),¹ the FWS B.O. could reduce those deliveries by 18 to 29 percent during average and dry conditions, respectively. As with the Interim Remedies, potential water supply restrictions under the new B.O. are dependent on highly variable factors such as hydrologic conditions affecting Delta water supplies, flow conditions in the Delta, migratory and reproductive patterns of Delta smelt, and numerous other non-Project factors that impact the health and abundance of Delta smelt and its critical habitat.

Due to a number of alleged scientific and other deficiencies in the new FWS B.O., in early 2009 the State Water Contractors, the San Luis and Delta-Mendota Water Authority and several individual State and Federal contractor water agencies filed legal challenges against the B.O., which were consolidated in the Federal District Court for the Eastern District of California. (*The Consolidated Delta Smelt Cases*, Lead Case No. 1:09-CV-00407-OWW-GSA.) Early on in the proceedings, several of the plaintiff water agencies and the federal defendants filed cross-motions for summary judgment to determine whether a violation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) occurred in connection with federal defendants' adoption and implementation of the NMFS B.O. and its RPA. In a Memorandum Decision issued in November 2009, the court ruled that the moving plaintiffs were entitled to summary judgment on their claim that the federal defendants violated NEPA by failing to perform any NEPA analysis prior to adopting and implementing the new FWS B.O. and its RPA. (*The Consolidated Delta Smelt Cases*, Doc. No. 399 at 46-47.)

Separately, several of the plaintiffs filed a motion for preliminary injunction against the implementation of Component 2 (Action 3) of the RPA that proposed to restrict Delta exports during a particular timeframe in spring and summer months, depending on certain biological and environmental parameters. In May 2010, the court issued its Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law Regarding Plaintiffs' Request for Preliminary Injunction Against Implementation of RPA Component 2 (a/k/a Action 3). In that decision, the court reconfirmed its earlier ruling that the federal defendants failed to examine the potential environmental and human consequences of the RPA actions adopted under the B.O. in violation of NEPA. (*Consolidated Delta Smelt Cases*, Doc. No. 704 at 120-122.) The court also ruled that the plaintiffs were likely to prevail on their claims that FWS violated the ESA and the federal Administrative Procedure Act (APA) in formulating and adopting RPA Component 2 without support of the best available science and without adequate explanation regarding its biological benefit to Delta smelt. (*Id.* at 123-125.)

In the meantime, the parties also filed cross motions for summary judgment to obtain a final ruling in the cases. Those motions were argued in early July 2010. In December 2010, the court issued a memorandum decision that invalidated the B.O. and RPA in several respects and remanded the matter to FWS. Further proceedings are expected to address interim operations of the SWP and CVP.

Because Delta smelt are also protected under the California ESA, the SWP and CVP are required to obtain take authorization from the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG). In July 2009, DFG issued a "consistency determination" pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2080.1. That determination provides that operations of the SWP and CVP are in compliance with CESA so long as those operations occur in accordance with the FWS Delta smelt B.O. and RPA. Because the consistency determination posed a risk that the SWP could remain bound to the terms of the RPA even if the FWS B.O. was eventually overturned by a

¹ See additional discussion below regarding SWP exports as authorized under D-1641.

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federal court, DFG's decision was challenged in state court by the State Water Contractors and the Kern County Water Agency. (*State Water Contractors v. California Department of Fish and Game, et al.*, Kern County Superior Court Case No. S-1500-CV-268074²; *Kern County Water Agency v. Department of Fish and Game, et al.*, Sacramento County Superior Court Case No. 34-2010-80000450.) The challenges assert, among other things, that DFG's consistency determination is invalid because it relies upon and seeks to enforce restrictions established under the new FWS B.O. that are alleged under *The Consolidated Delta Smelt Cases* to be invalid and unenforceable. The case is currently stayed by stipulation of the parties, pending the outcome of *The Consolidated Delta Smelt Cases*.

These litigation matters challenging the validity of the FWS B.O. and the DFG consistency determination give rise to the possibility that the restrictions on SWP exports could be relaxed and that SWP exports may return to the levels allowed by the Interim Remedies (above) or State Board Decision D-1641³ pending issuance of a new B.O. and/or the implementation of the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP). As an additional factor, by letter dated May 3, 2010, the federal Secretaries of the Department of Interior and the Department of Commerce have announced a joint initiative to develop a single integrated B.O. for the Delta and related water operations of the CVP and SWP.⁴ The timing, nature and extent of the regulatory measures to be contained in any such B.O., and whether those measures would be legally challenged or upheld, cannot be predicted with any degree of certainty at this time.

New National Marine Fisheries Service Biological Opinion Salmon/Anadromous Species and Related Litigation Matters

SWP operations have also been challenged in connection with potential impacts to anadromous species in the San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary. In October 2004, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issued a "no jeopardy" determination and B.O. analyzing potential impacts to federally listed winter-run and spring-run salmon and steelhead trout related to the long-term coordinated operations of the CVP and SWP through the year 2030. As with the 2005 FWS B.O. and *Kemphorne* case discussed above, OCAP was the project/action evaluated in the 2004 NMFS B.O., which included the Projects' existing Delta pumping operations, proposals to increase SWP pumping by 20 percent over the long term, and other operational changes. In August 2005, several environmental groups filed suit in federal court against NMFS and the Secretary of Commerce challenging the validity of the B.O. (*Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, et al. v. Gutierrez, et al.*, Case No. 1:06-CV-00245-OWW-GSA.)

In April 2008, the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California issued

² In June 2010, the case was transferred to Sacramento, California, where it is now referenced as *State Water Contractors v. California Department of Fish and Game, et al.*, Sacramento County Superior Court Case No. 34-2010-80000552.

³ D-1641 implements the objectives of the 1995 Bay-Delta Plan and imposes flow and water quality objectives to assure protection of beneficial uses in the Delta. The requirements of D-1641 address, among other things, standards for fish and wildlife protection, municipal and industrial water quality, agricultural water quality, and salinity. D-1641 imposed a new operating regime for the Delta, including measures such as X2, an export/inflow ratio, and the Vernalis Adaptive Management Program (VAMP). The standards under D-1641 are accomplished through requirements and conditions imposed on the water right permits for the SWP, the CVP and others. (See, California Water Plan Update 2009, Regional Reports Volume 3, Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta at DB-6.)

⁴ <http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/upload/Roy.pdf>

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its decision invalidating the NMFS B.O. for failing to comply with the requirements of the federal ESA. As with the *Kempthorne* case (above), the court did not vacate the B.O., meaning that SWP and CVP operations were authorized to continue pending the preparation of a new B.O. and any interim remedies imposed by the court. Remedy proceedings were held similar to those conducted in the *Kempthorne* case discussed above and, in separate Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law issued in July and October 2008, Judge Wanger determined that additional water supply restrictions beyond those required in *Kempthorne* (i.e., the Interim Remedies for Delta smelt) were not required at that time for the anadromous species.

On June 4, 2009, NMFS issued a new B.O. regarding the effects of SWP and CVP operations on listed winter and spring-run salmon, steelhead trout, green sturgeon, and southern resident killer whales. Like the new FWS B.O. discussed above, the NMFS B.O. concludes that the proposed long-term coordinated operations of the CVP and SWP will jeopardize the species and adversely modify the critical habitats of most of those species. Pursuant to the ESA, because the B.O. is a "jeopardy" opinion, NMFS was required to formulate and adopt a Reasonable and Prudent Alternative (RPA) to the proposed action that NMFS believed would not cause jeopardy to the species or adversely modify or destroy their critical habitats, and which can be implemented by Reclamation and DWR. (16 U.S.C. § 1536(b)(3)(A).) The RPA adopted by NMFS imposed various new operating restrictions upon the CVP and SWP which have the potential to result in substantial reductions in water supply from the Projects.

NMFS calculated that its new B.O. has the potential to reduce SWP deliveries from the Delta by 7 percent in addition to the potential reductions under the new FWS B.O. for Delta smelt (above). DWR has estimated that average annual reductions to SWP deliveries could be closer to 10 percent beyond the restrictions imposed under the FWS B.O. (thus, a total of 28 to 39 percent during average and dry conditions, respectively, in comparison to SWP exports authorized under D-1641). As with the FWS B.O., potential water supply restrictions under the NMFS B.O. are dependent on several variable factors, such as hydrologic conditions in the Delta region, migratory and reproductive patterns of protected salmonid species, and other non-Project factors that impact the health and abundance of the species and their habitats.

In June 2009, numerous legal challenges were filed against the new NMFS B.O. and consolidated in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California alleging, among other things, that the operating restrictions set forth in the B.O. are in violation of the federal ESA, the federal APA, and other laws. (*The Consolidated Salmonid Cases*, Lead Case No. 1:09-CV-1053-OWW-DLB.) Early in the proceedings, several of the plaintiff water agencies and the federal defendants filed cross-motions for summary judgment to determine whether a NEPA violation occurred in connection with federal defendants' adoption and implementation of the NMFS B.O. and its RPA. The court heard oral argument on the motions in February 2010, and took the matter under submission.

Separately, in January 2010, several of the plaintiff water agencies filed applications for a temporary restraining order and motions for preliminary injunction regarding the implementation of RPA Actions IV.2.1 and IV.2.3, which are designed to restrict Delta exports during a particular timeframe in spring and summer months, depending on certain biological and environmental parameters. In February 2010, the court issued its Memorandum Decision and Order Re Plaintiffs' Motion for Temporary Restraining Order. The decision found that federal defendants violated NEPA by failing to consider the potential human and environmental impacts

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caused by implementation of the RPA Actions, and that a temporary injunction against RPA Action IV.2.3 would not cause jeopardy to the species, whereas a failure to enjoin the Action would cause irreparable water supply impacts to the plaintiffs. (*The Consolidated Salmonid Cases*, Doc. No. 202 at 20-22.) In subsequent rulings issued in March 2010, the court ordered that plaintiffs were entitled to summary judgment on their claims that federal defendants violated NEPA by failing to prepare any NEPA documentation in the adoption and implementation of the NMFS B.O. and its RPA. (*The Consolidated Salmonid Cases*, Doc. Nos. 266 and 288 at 3.)

Plaintiffs' motions for a preliminary injunction were heard in April and May 2010, and in May 2010 the court issued Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law Re Plaintiffs' Request for Preliminary Injunction. In that decision, the court reconfirmed its previous ruling that federal defendants violated NEPA by failing to undertake an analysis of whether the RPA Actions adopted by NMFS under its new B.O. would adversely impact humans and the human environment. (*The Consolidated Salmonid Cases*, Doc. No. 347 at 129-130, 138.) Further, the court ruled that the plaintiff water agencies had a substantial likelihood of being able to show that the federal defendants violated the ESA and the APA by failing to adequately justify, through generally recognized scientific principles, the precise flow prescriptions imposed by RPA Actions IV.2.1 and IV.2.3. (*Id.* at 130, 133-134.)⁵

Following its May 18th ruling, the court conducted further proceedings and accepted additional evidence to address the proposed injunction and whether the relief requested by the plaintiffs would adversely affect the species (namely, Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon and Central Valley steelhead). Based on those proceedings, in June 2010, the court issued Supplemental Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law Re Plaintiffs' Request for Preliminary Injunction. (*The Consolidated Salmonid Cases*, Doc. No. 380.) The Supplemental Findings noted that if RPA Actions IV.2.1 and IV.2.3 were enjoined through June 15, 2010, the FWS B.O. for Delta smelt (above) would control Project operations between May 26th and June 15th, unless those restrictions were also enjoined, in which case Project operations would be controlled by D-1641.⁶ (Doc. No. 380 at 12.) Accordingly, the court granted an injunction against RPA Actions IV.2.1 and IV.2.3 and authorized Project operations in accordance with D-1641, provided that export pumping could be reduced on shortened notice upon a showing of jeopardy to the species or adverse modification of its critical habitat. (*Id.* at 17-18.)

In August and November 2010, the parties also filed motions for summary judgment to obtain a final ruling in the cases. Those motions were argued on December 16 and 17, 2010, and the court is expected to issue a memorandum decision on the motions.

⁵ RPA Action IV.2.1 limits combined water exports by the CVP and SWP based on San Joaquin River flows as measured at Vernalis. (NMFS B.O. at 642.) When flows at Vernalis range from 0 to 6,000 cfs, Action IV.2.1 limits combined CVP and SWP exports to 1,500 cfs. (NMFS B.O. at 642.) When flows at Vernalis range from 6,000 to 21,750 cfs, Action IV.2.1 imposes an inflow to combined CVP and SWP exports ratio of 4:1. (NMFS B.O. at 642.) The pumping restrictions associated with Action IV.2.1 terminate May 31st. (NMFS B.O. at 641-642.) RPA Action IV.2.3 limits Old and Middle River (OMR) flows to no more negative than -2,500 cfs between January 1 and June 15, or until the average daily water temperature at Mossdale is greater than 72 degrees Fahrenheit for seven consecutive days, whichever occurs first. (NMFS B.O. at 648-650.)

⁶ Among other things, D-1641 limits Project exports to a combined total of not more than 35 percent of total Delta inflow and further limits Project operations to ensure that certain water quality standards are met as measured by the location of the isohaline condition referred to as spring X2. (See *The Consolidated Salmonid Cases*, Doc. No. 380 at 12-14.)

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Because the salmon species covered by the new NMFS B.O. are also protected under CESA, the SWP and CVP are required to obtain take authorization from DFG. In September 2009, DFG issued a “consistency determination” pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2080.1. That determination provides that operations of the SWP and CVP are in compliance with CESA so long as those operations occur in accordance with the RPA set forth in the NMFS B.O. Because the consistency determination posed a risk that the SWP could remain bound to the terms of the RPA even if the NMFS B.O. was eventually overturned by a federal court, DFG’s decision was challenged in state court by the State Water Contractors and the Kern County Water Agency. (*State Water Contractors v. California Department of Fish and Game, et al.*, Kern County Superior Court Case No. S-1500-CV-268497.)⁷ The challenge asserts, among other things, that DFG’s consistency determination is invalid because it relies upon and seeks to enforce restrictions established under the NMFS B.O. that are alleged under *The Consolidated Salmon Cases* to be invalid and unenforceable. As described above, the Federal District Court for the Eastern District of California has ruled that plaintiffs have a strong likelihood of being able to show that portions of the NMFS B.O. fail to comply with the ESA and the APA, and has enjoined implementation of several RPA Actions. Because the court’s ruling effectively modified aspects of the NMFS B.O. for 2010, DWR requested that DFG make a determination that the NMFS B.O., as modified by the court, remained consistent with the provisions of CESA. In May 2010, DFG issued a new consistency determination, finding the court-modified NMFS B.O. consistent with CESA. In June 2010, an amended complaint was filed against the May 24th consistency determination. By stipulation of the parties, the case is currently stayed pending the outcome of *The Consolidated Salmonid Cases*.

The current legal challenges regarding the validity of the new NMFS B.O. and the DFG consistency determination give rise to the possibility that the restrictions on SWP exports could be relaxed and that SWP exports may return to the higher levels allowed by the Interim Remedies decision in *Kempthorne* (above) or D-1641 pending the issuance of a new B.O. and/or implementation of the BDCP. Furthermore, as noted above, in May 2010 the Department of Interior and the Department of Commerce announced a joint initiative to develop a single, integrated B.O. for the coordinated operations of the CVP and SWP in the Delta.⁸ The timing, nature, and extent of the regulatory measures to be contained that B.O., and whether those measures would be legally challenged or upheld, cannot be predicted with any degree of certainty at this time.

Watershed Enforcers v. California Department of Water Resources

Another litigation matter concerning SWP operations is *Watershed Enforcers v. Cal. Dept. of Water Resources* (2010) 185 Cal. App. 4th 969 (Alameda County Superior Court Case No. RG06292124). In that case, a plaintiffs group filed suit against DWR alleging the SWP was being operated without “take authorization” under CESA. The case was heard by the Alameda County Superior Court in November 2006 and, in April 2007, the court ordered DWR to cease and desist further operations of the Harvey O. Banks pumping plant facilities of the SWP unless DWR obtained proper authorization from DFG for the take of Delta smelt and salmon species listed under CESA. The trial court decision was appealed by DWR and several water agency

⁷ In June 2010, the case was transferred to Sacramento, California, where it is now referenced as *State Water Contractors v. California Department of Fish and Game, et al.*, Sacramento County Superior Court Case No. 34-2010-80000560.

⁸ <http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/upload/Roy.pdf>

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parties and the court's order was stayed pending the appeal, meaning that DWR was not required to cease its operations of the Banks facilities.

As discussed above, the new FWS and NMFS B.O.s were issued while the *Watershed Enforcers* case was pending on appeal. Based on those new B.O.s, DFG issued consistency determinations and take authorization for the SWP under CESA with respect to Delta smelt and the listed anadromous species. (Also discussed above, those consistency determinations have been challenged in state court.) Thereafter, in September 2009, DWR and one of the water agency parties dismissed their appeals in the *Watershed Enforcers* case. The case remained active in 2009-2010, however, for purposes of resolving the discrete legal issue raised by the remaining water agency parties as to whether DWR is the type of entity that is subject to the take prohibitions under CESA. In a June 2010 decision, the First District Court of Appeal affirmed the trial court decision in all respects, including the determination that DWR qualifies as a "person" within the meaning of CESA, which means that DWR is subject to CESA's permitting requirements. (*Watershed Enforcers v. Department of Water Resources* (2010) 185 Cal. App. 4th 969, 973.)

California Department of Fish and Game Incidental Take Permit for Longfin Smelt and Related Litigation Matters

Regulatory actions related to longfin smelt also have the potential to affect the availability and reliability of SWP supplies. In February 2008, the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) approved a petition to list the longfin smelt as a "candidate" species under CESA. Under CESA, once a species is granted candidate status, it is entitled to protections until the Commission determines whether to list the species as threatened or endangered. To afford such interim protection, in February 2008, the Commission adopted the first in a series of emergency take regulations that authorized the CVP and SWP to take longfin smelt, yet established certain operating restrictions on Project exports from the Delta in an effort to protect the species. The emergency regulations were proposed to remain in effect until February 2009, at which time the Commission was required to decide whether to list the longfin as a threatened or endangered species. Initially, the Commission's take regulation imposed the same Delta export restrictions that were established in the *Kemphorne* case (i.e., the Interim Remedies discussed above). In November 2008, however, the Commission revised its emergency regulations in a manner that threatened to impose export restrictions beyond those established for Delta smelt. According to information published by DWR, the Commission's 2008-2009 revised emergency take regulations had the potential to reduce SWP supplies in the January to February 2009 period by up to approximately 300,000 acre-feet under a worst-case scenario. Under other scenarios, however, the SWP delivery reductions were expected to be no greater than those imposed under the new FWS B.O. for Delta smelt. In December 2008, several water agency interests filed suit against the Commission's revised take regulation, alleging it violated CESA.

In March 2009, the Commission determined that the listing of longfin smelt as a "threatened" species was warranted under CESA. CESA sets forth a general prohibition against the take of a threatened species except as otherwise authorized by statute. One such authorization is provided by California Fish and Game Code section 2081, wherein DFG may authorize the incidental taking of a threatened species in connection with an otherwise lawful activity through the issuance of a permit. In February 2009, in advance of an official listing of the species as threatened, DFG issued Incidental Take Permit No. 2081-2009-001-03 (Permit)

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to DWR which imposes terms and conditions on the ongoing and long-term operation of SWP facilities in the Delta for the protection of longfin smelt. The operating restrictions under the Permit are based in large part on the restrictions imposed on the SWP by the new FWS B.O. for Delta smelt (see above).

In June 2009, the Commission officially listed longfin smelt as a threatened species under CESA. As with the FWS B.O., potential water supply restrictions under the Permit are dependent on several variable factors, such as hydrologic conditions in the Delta region, migratory and reproductive patterns of longfin smelt, and other non-Project factors affecting longfin smelt abundance in the Delta. DWR has not indicated whether any particular reductions in SWP exports are likely to result from the Permit. As previously noted, however, DWR has estimated that the restrictions imposed by the FWS B.O. and RPA for Delta smelt could reduce SWP deliveries between 18 and 29 percent in comparison to Project deliveries authorized under D-1641. In March 2009, due to a number of alleged scientific and other deficiencies in the Permit, the State Water Contractors challenged the Permit in Sacramento County Superior Court. (*State Water Contractors v. California Dept. of Fish and Game, et al.*, Sac. Sup. Ct. Case No. 34-2009-80000203.) That case puts DFG's ability to enforce the Permit into question.

California Drought Conditions

On June 4, 2008, the Governor of California proclaimed a statewide drought due to record-low rainfall in Spring 2008 and court-ordered restrictions on Delta exports as discussed above. (Executive Order S-06-08.) Soon thereafter, the Governor proclaimed a state of drought emergency to exist within the Counties of Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern. (Proclamation dated June 12, 2008.) On February 27, 2009, the Governor declared a statewide water supply emergency to combat California's third consecutive year of drought conditions, evidenced by low reservoir storage and estimated snowpack water content at that time. (Proclamation dated February 27, 2009.)

Since then, statewide hydrologic conditions have improved, although the State's water supply emergency declaration has not been lifted. In March 2010, DWR announced that both manual and electronic readings indicate that the water content in California's mountain snowpack was 107 percent of normal and stated that the "readings boost our hope that we will be able to increase the State Water Project allocation by this spring to deliver more water to our cities and farms." Among these readings, DWR reported that electronic sensor readings showed northern Sierra snow water equivalents at 126 percent of normal for that date, central Sierra at 93 percent, and southern Sierra at 109 percent.⁹ As of January 2011, DWR reported snow water equivalents for the northern Sierra at 164 percent of normal, 186 percent of normal for the central Sierra, and 260 percent for the southern Sierra.¹⁰ According to DWR's California Data Exchange Center, hydrologic conditions in California as of December 1, 2010 were as follows: statewide precipitation was 155 percent of average; statewide runoff was 115 percent of average; and key historical average statewide reservoir storage was at 105 percent, with two of the state's largest reservoirs, Lake Shasta (CVP) and Lake Oroville (SWP), respectively storing 116 percent and 75 percent of their historical averages.¹¹

⁹ <http://www.water.ca.gov/news/newsreleases/2010/030310snow.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/snow/DLYSWEQ>

¹¹ <http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/reports/EXECSUM>

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Development of Delta Plan and Delta Flow Criteria Pursuant to New State Laws

In November 2009, the California Legislature enacted SBX7-1 as one of several bills passed as part of a comprehensive water package related to water supply reliability, ecosystem health, and the Delta. SBX7-1 became effective on February 3, 2010 and adds Division 35 to the California Water Code (commencing with Section 85300), referred to as the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Reform Act of 2009 (Act). Among other things, the Act creates the Delta Stewardship Council (Council) as an independent agency of the state. (Wat. Code § 85200.) SBX7-1 also amends the California Public Resources Code to specify changes to the Delta Protection Commission and to create the Delta Conservancy. (Pub. Res. Code §§ 29702-29780.) The Act directs the Council to develop a comprehensive management plan for the Delta by January 1, 2012 (Delta Plan) and to first develop an Interim Plan that includes recommendations for early actions, projects, and programs for the Delta. (See *generally*, Second Draft Interim Plan, Prepared for Consideration by the Delta Stewardship Council at 1.)

In addition to these and other requirements, SBX7-1 requires the State Board to use the best available scientific information to develop flow criteria for the Delta ecosystem necessary to protect public trust resources, including fish, wildlife, recreation and scenic enjoyment. Similarly, DFG is required to identify quantifiable biological objectives and flow criteria for species of concern in the Delta. In August 2010, the State Board adopted Resolution No. 2010-0039 approving its report entitled “Development of Flow Criteria for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Ecosystem” (Flow Criteria). The State Board report concludes that substantially higher flows are needed through the Delta than in have occurred in previous decades in order to benefit zooplankton and various fish species. (Flow Criteria at 5-8.) Separately, in September 2010, DFG issued a draft report entitled “Quantifiable Biological Objectives and Flow Criteria for Aquatic and Terrestrial Species of Concern Dependent on the Delta” (DFG Report). The DFG Report is based on similar biological objectives and recommends Delta flows similar to those set forth in the State Board’s Flow Criteria. (DFG Report at 13.) Notably, both the State Board and DFG recognize that their recommended flow criteria for the Delta do *not* balance the public interest or the need to provide an adequate and reliable water supply. (Flow Criteria at 4; DFG Report at 16.) Also of importance, both the State Board and DFG acknowledge that their recommended flow criteria do not have any regulatory or adjudicatory effect; however, they may be used to inform the Council as it prepares the Delta Plan, and may be considered as the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) process moves forward. (Flow Criteria at 3, 10; DFG Report at ES-4.)

DWR’s Final 2009 SWP Delivery Reliability Report

DWR continues to evaluate the issues affecting SWP exports from the Delta and how those issues may affect the long-term availability and reliability of SWP deliveries to the SWP Contractors. In September 2010, DWR released its Final 2009 SWP Delivery Reliability Report (DWR Report), which forecasts additional reductions to SWP supplies in comparison to the 2007 Report. According to DWR, the long-term average delivery of contractual SWP Table A supply is projected to be 60 percent under current and future conditions over the 20-year projection. (DWR Report at 43, 48, Tables 6.3 and 6.12.) Within that long-term average, SWP Table A deliveries can range from 7 percent (single dry year) to 68 percent (single wet year) of contractual amounts under current conditions, and from 11 percent (single dry year) to 97 percent (single wet year) under future conditions. (Id. at 43-44, 49, Tables 6.4, 6.5, 6.13 and 6.14.) Contractual amounts are projected to range from 32 to 38 percent during multiple-dry

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year periods, and from 79 to 93 percent during multiple wet periods. (Id. at 49, Tables 6.13 and 6.14.)

To ensure a conservative analysis, the DWR Report expressly assumes and accounts for the institutional, environmental, regulatory, and legal factors affecting SWP supplies, including, but not limited to, water quality constraints, fishery protections, other D-1641 requirements and the operational limitations imposed by the FWS and NMFS B.O.s that are discussed above. The DWR Report also considers the potential effects of Delta levee failures and other seismic or flood events. (See, e.g., DWR Report at 19-24, 25-28, 29-35, Appendices A, A-1, A-2, B.) Notably, the DWR Report assumes that all of these restrictions and limitations will remain in place over the next 20-year period and that no actions to improve the Delta will occur, even though numerous legal challenges, various Delta restoration processes, and new legal requirements for Delta improvements are currently underway (i.e., BDCP, Delta Vision, Delta Plan, etc.). Finally, DWR's long-term SWP delivery reliability analyses incorporate assumptions that are intended to account for potential supply shortfalls related to global climate change. (See, e.g., DWR Report at 19, 29-30, Appendices A-B.) Based on these and other factors, the DWR Report presents a conservative projection of SWP delivery reliability.

Conclusion

DWR's most recently published SWP Delivery Reliability Report (September 2010) demonstrates that the projected long-term average delivery amounts of contractual SWP Table A supplies have decreased in comparison to previous estimates. However, as noted, the projections developed by DWR are predicated on conservative assumptions, which make the projections useful from a long-range urban water supply planning perspective.¹² Indeed, recent rulings in various legal actions and other factors described above, among others, support higher estimates of average annual SWP deliveries than projected in DWR's 2009 Report. While this may lead DWR to increase its projections in its next scheduled Report, the 2009 Report remains the best available information concerning the long-term delivery reliability of SWP supplies.

¹² See, e.g., *Sonoma County Water Coalition v. Sonoma County Water Agency* (2010) 189 Cal.App.4th 33; *Watsonville Pilots Association v. City of Watsonville* (2010) 183 Cal.App.4th 1059; *Vineyard Area Citizens for Responsible Growth v. City of Rancho Cordova* (2007) 40 Cal.4th 412.